

Brick Township Region
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
Intersection of Garden State Parkway and
State Route 70
Cedarwood Park Vicinity
Ocean County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1015

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

REGION OF BRICK TOWNSHIP

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Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, Intersection of Garden State Parkway and State Route 70, Cedarwood Park Vicinity, Ocean County, New Jersey.

Significance: Brick Township, first settled in the early eighteenth century, was a well-established commercial region by the early nineteenth century. This area, fronting the bay, relied on the products of forest and sea long before the railroad brought resort trade. The coming of the automobile, and eventually the Garden State Parkway, however, cut through Brick Township, creating a congested and divided region, that today offers little of its former character.

History: Entering Brick Township from the parkway exit, motorists today are immediately confronted with the municipal complex and branch library on one side of Route 549 and the high school and post office on the other. The absence of pedestrian paths prevents walking from place to place. Pushed aside by miles of shopping centers, these buildings do not even attempt to create a unified urban space. By 1976 Brick was "a township in search of an identity," better known for the Laurelton traffic circle than for historic Butcher Forge. Local residents describe the township as "pockets of people" who lack the "established, historic downtown" or "hub" necessary in any healthy community.¹ As the strategic position of the municipal complex illustrates, the area relies heavily on the parkway for freedom from traffic congestion. Ironically, the towns' problems began in the 1960s when the parkway brought a population that tripled over the next ten years.² Despite their lack of unity today, the communities which make up Brick Township have rich pasts of maritime and industrial success.

The town of Brick was first settled by whalers in the 1690s and later became a center of trade for sea captains living along Kettle Creek and Metedeconk River.³ By the 1740s, the creek powered the sawmills that produced lumber for ship-building and other industries. Ships from Charleston and New York visited the Gravelly Docks, now Wharf Street, at the turn of the eighteenth century.⁴ During the early 1800s, Cedar Bridge was the center of shipping activity. At the head of the Metedeconk and on the road between Toms River and Freehold, the maritime community offered a port for steamers until the destruction of Cranberry Inlet closed its door to the

¹ Fred Simmonds, "Brick: A Township in Search of an Identity," Ashburv Park Press (Sunday December 5, 1976), D3.

² Simmonds, D3.

³ Pauline Miller, "Brick was a Seafaring Community," newspaper article.

⁴ Denis J. Kelly, "All Roads Lead To Brick" (December 23, 1980), 20.

Atlantic, and old Cedar Bridge was "lost to the present, due to inundation by housing developments."⁵

Extensive development occurred along the river's edge in 1808, when John Lippincott built a forge "on the south side of Metedeconk near Indian Stage." Two years later, Banajah Butcher and Barzillia Burr acquired the business and began manufacturing water pipe and distributing it to New York City. The successful industry became known as Butcher's Forge, and the town was known as Burrsville⁶ until 1912, when the Park and Tilford Egg Company changed the name to Laurelton.⁷ The Route 72 site of the old forge is now occupied by a boat basin near Forge Pond Road.

When Woolman was writing in 1878, Brick township extended to present-day Lakewood, the site of the Bergen Iron Works founded by Joseph Brick. In his entry on Bricksburg, Woolman describes the town of 1,000 residents as centering around the industrial company.

Bricksburg is on the line of the New Jersey Southern Railroad, and is built on both sides of the Metedeconk River, was formerly known as Bergen Iron Works, once owned by Mr. Joseph Brick, from whom the township took its name. The water-power at this place is considered very good, and is supplied by a long, narrow lake, called Lake Carasaljo.⁸

The lake was named after Brick's three daughters, Caroline, Sarah and Josephine and the entire area was known as Bricksburg from 1865 until sometime before 1889.⁹

Joseph Brick may have laid down a cedar plank road, now Cedar Bridge Road, from the iron works to the docks at Metedeconk Neck. In 1834 he purchased Butcher's Forge and began production of "the first water pipes laid out in the streets of New York City."¹⁰ Another source claims Brick built a sand road between the Bergen plant and Cedar Bridge (Laurelton), and that he was interested in Butcher's Forge primarily for docking purposes.¹¹

A more unusual industry developed along the west bank of the Manasquan River between 1824 and 1850. Nicholas Van Wickle purchased 400 acres at "Turtle Gut"

⁵ "Ocean County Historical Sites Survey, Brick" (Toms River: Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission, 1981), 3.

⁶ Charles S. Boyer, Early Forges and Furnaces in New Jersey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 51.

⁷ "Ocean County Historical Sites Survey, Brick," 4.

⁸ H.C. Woolman and T.F. Rose, Historical and Biographical Atlas of the New Jersey Coast (Philadelphia: Woolman and Rose, 1878; reprint, Toms River, N.J.: Ocean County Historical Society, 1985), 35.

⁹ Gustav Kobbe, The New Jersey Coast and Pines (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977), 86.

¹⁰ Miller.

¹¹ William Dewey, "Bog Primary Source for Bergen Iron Works," Coin World (Wednesday, March 27, 1985), 60.

for his pottery business. The factory produced a "plain grey stoneware decorated with blue hoops and simple brushed designs of flowers and leaves."¹² Local general stores and farmers were supplied with Van Wickle dishes and crockery. All that remains today of the factory site, located at the what is now the corner of Route 70 and Riviera Drive, is a plaque commissioned by the Brick Township Historical Society.

Cranberry farming was another important business in Brick just after the Civil War when, for a brief time, Ocean County led the nation in production.¹³ "Mutah Patterson's Cranberry House," built along Drum Point Road at the turn of the nineteenth century, belonged to local cranberry farmers. Mutah and John Patterson owned bogs in Cedar Bridge and Osbornville. Brick Plaza also may be the site of a once prosperous bog.¹⁴ The Osbornville School, as well as examples of typical two-and-one-half story farmhouses are also located on Drum Point Road.¹⁵

The farming town of Herbertsville in the northwestern section of Brick Township was settled in the 1820s and 1830s by the Herbert brothers--Hampton, William, John, Jacob and James.¹⁶ Perhaps because it originated as a farming community, but more likely due to its location, the older section of Herbertsville remains relatively intact. A variety of Victorian homes and farmhouses and a remodeled school still stand on Herbertsville Road. The brick one-room schoolhouse, constructed in 1858, is now two rooms, covered with stucco. Religious meetings took place in the school before the construction of the Herbertsville Methodist Church in 1875. Sidney Herbert's General Store, once the local post office, has been remodeled into a residence near the fire station.¹⁷

In 1869, the Bricksburg Tract, 15,000 acres midway between New York and Philadelphia on the New Jersey Southern Railroad, was advertised as a region of "farm fruit" and "cranberry lands" with a "mild and salubrious climate" free from fever, ague and "malarious diseases of any kind." The property centered around Bricksburg, extending south to the edge of Burrsville and following the north branch of Toms River almost to Goshen. Advertising a new hotel-sanitarium, four churches, extensive manufactories, a new school and countless job opportunities, the brochure addressed those eager to escape from the overcrowded cities of New York and Philadelphia. According to the promotion, the town of Bricksburg offered all the

¹² "Historic Tour Guide of Brick Township, New Jersey" (Brick Township: Brick Township Historical Society, n.d.)

¹³ "Ocean County Historical Sites Survey, Brick," 6.

¹⁴ The Brick Township Historical Society, 13.

¹⁵ "Ocean County Historical Sites Survey Brick," 7.

¹⁶ Debra Del Prete, "Historic Brick" Coast (January/February, 1989), 16.

¹⁷ "Historic Tour of Brick Township."

convenience of city life within a pleasant, country atmosphere. "The streets and avenues are graded and turnpiked, the rolling land gives great variety and beauty for building sites."¹⁸ Writing about ten years later, Woolman echoed these sentiments in his praise of the "somewhat rolling land for this section of the country" which "furnishes many elegant building sites."¹⁹

Beginning around 1916, land speculators from New York and Philadelphia seem to have been responsible for residential developments on an even larger scale. Those purchasing plots in the Lakewood area would have received a free set of books from the Philadelphia Record. In 1924, the Hudson Dispatch imitated the New York Tribune's deal at Beachwood by offering free newspaper subscriptions to future subscribers settling in the area.²⁰ During the 1930s, the Van Ness Corporation financed the development of Breton Woods and neighborhoods along the south shore of the Metedeconk, such as Cape Breton and Vanada Woods. The opposite shore was developed by the Vanard Corporation, who also constructed summer homes in Shore Acres near Kettle Creek. After World War II, many of the cottages were remodeled into year-round residences.²¹

The 1959 Brick Township chamber of commerce guide depicted an aerial view of the Laurelton traffic circle.²² Though residents were once proud of the modern engineering that made "Circle City" the "central hub of the state," the highway section could not meet modern traffic demands. The state department of transportation spent more than \$2 million improving the out-dated circle in the 1980s.²³ Built in 1936 by the WPA, the circle was named for Laurelton Farms, the once famous "largest poultry farm in the state." In 1987, chicken houses were still visible along west Route 88.²⁴

Until the completion of the Garden State Parkway in the mid 1950s, Brick Township was described as "a sparsely settled rural area."²⁵ In an effort to create identity, municipal authorities are currently attempting to deal with the problems of overdevelopment. When Kobbe traveled through the pinelands of inland Brick, he deplored the "deserted, decaying shanties, grouped around the ruins of the forges

¹⁸ "Bricksburg Land and Improvement Company," brochure (ca. 1869.)

¹⁹ Woolman and Rose, 35.

²⁰ Eleanor Angott, "The History of Brick Township, Chapter I," Ocean County Observer (Jan. 16, 1964), 28.

²¹ Edward Walsh, "Parkway paved for Brick's growth," Asbury Park Press (Sunday, March 2, 1986), H1.

²² Chamber of Commerce of Brick Township, 1957 Official Guide (Point Pleasant: Kronowitt-Howard Company, 1957), 5.

²³ Walsh, H1.

²⁴ David Krewson, "The Beginning of a Traffic Nightmare," Town News (Wednesday, June 10, 1987), 2B.

²⁵ Walsh, H1.

which this region harbored in days long since passed."²⁶ Today, things seem to have come full "circle," as fast-food shanties decay beside the ruins of out-dated shopping centers.

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- Sources: Eleanor Angott, "The History of Brick Township, chapter 1." Ocean County Observer, January 16, 1964, 28.
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²⁶ Kobbe, 85.

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Project Information:

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